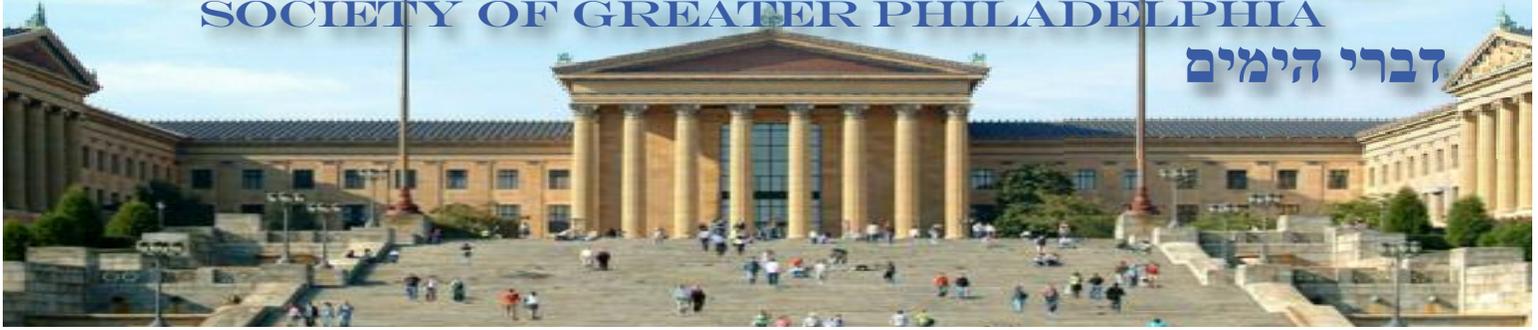


# CHRONICLES

JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL  
SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

דברי הימים



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## REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR CHRONICLES TEAM

Summer 2015



I recently read *The Telephone Gambit: Chasing Alexander Graham Bell's Secret* in which Seth Shulman credibly refutes the generally held belief that Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. The author pored over documents and diagrams submitted with patent applications from both Bell and the true inventor, Elisha Gray, analyzed the sequence of events, and theorized the motivations of the principal individuals involved, thus underscoring the importance of accurate research which can also be applied to our genealogy research.

For many years my mother's family believed that my grandmother and her sister personally experienced the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. There was a catch, however; this fire occurred in March 1911, and those two women arrived in the U.S. in December 1911. I distinctly remember a conversation with Grandma on the fiftieth anniversary of her arrival when she told me that she and her sister had been in a fire in the garment district in New York City and searched for each other. However, I don't recall Grandma actually uttering the words "Triangle Shirtwaist Fire" then. In fact I don't think her command of English was such that she would've been able to successfully articulate that phrase.

After doing some research, I learned that there had been another fire in the garment district in April 1912, which fortunately was brought under control without loss of life except for one man. While it was exciting to think that  
*(Continued on pg. 3)*

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Submission of articles on genealogy for publication in *CHRONICLES* is enthusiastically encouraged. The editorial board reserves the right to decide whether to publish an article and to edit all submissions. Please keep a copy of your material. Anything you want returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

While email and other electronic files are highly preferred, the editors will be happy to work with you and your material in any form. If you have an idea, please contact Evan Fishman of the Editorial Board by email: [editor@jgsgp.org](mailto:editor@jgsgp.org) or by phone at 856-667-2077.

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**Quiz Answer:**  
Anna D. Lincoln is better known by her business name, Nan Duskin. Her internationally known ladies apparel boutique opened in 1927 at 18th & Sansom Streets selling high fashion goods. After Nan Duskin's death in 1980, the shop survived under new ownership into the mid-1990s when it succumbed to a bankruptcy.

(“Reflections” from pg. 1) my grandmother was a survivor of the tragic and infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, I couldn’t ignore basic historical facts.

We are often rewarded when we insist on accuracy, persist in uncovering the truth, and unravel mysteries even over long stretches of time. Susan Neidich and Mike Jaron share their successful experiences.

It’s gratifying to hear that material in *Chronicles* concretely helps a reader. We hope that our “Tips, Techniques & Tools” features provide useful guidance. Sometimes an article strikes a receptive chord which is what happened for Shelda Sandler.

Contemporaneous with this summer’s IAJGS-Jerusalem conference, we’re pleased to include Elaine Ellison’s account of her December/Chanukah trip with her children and grandchildren and their experiences with some Israeli relatives, past and present, as well as Felicia Mode Alexander’s examination of Holocaust research sites which were pivotal in her eventually meeting an Israeli cousin.

When he spoke in May 2012 to alumni of Congregation Beth Am Israel, previously located in Southwest Philadelphia, Dennis Greenstein presented an engaging portrait, replete with a colorful cast of characters, which could be replicated in a movie. The *shul* was one of the central venues for him while growing up, an experience that Rabbi Shalom Bronstein, a former Philadelphian who has resided in Jerusalem for several decades, shares. We incorporate memories from both gentlemen here. As it turns out, they knew each other way back when. These two pieces, along with Mike Jaron’s, exemplify the term “social history.”

One of the joys of being *Chronicles* editor is the opportunity to be the first to view outstanding material submitted by our members. When new member, Paulette Jellinek, introduced herself at our May meeting she told us about a website she had developed based on a cadre of letters received by a first cousin who had recently died. Paulette shares the story of the development of that website in her poignant article “Shoah Letters.”

There’s much more to peruse in our summer issue including photographs from our recent genealogy fair. This was our fifth, successful effort to introduce the world of Jewish genealogy in another neighborhood in the sprawling area we call “greater Philadelphia.”

Have a pleasant summer, and we hope to intrigue you in our fall issue with reports from July’s IAJGS-Jerusalem conference. ❖

*Evan Fishman, Editor*



**WE EXTEND A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS  
& HIGHLIGHT SOME OF THE NAMES & TOWNS  
THEY ARE RESEARCHING**

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Barbara Hoffman Biderman Soffer, Codohnkob, from Odessa & Kristtvanetz	Voorhees NJ	Gary Rosner Rosner and Katz from Philadelphia, Brooklyn and Bereguj- falu, Hungary	Port Jefferson Station NY
Paulette Jellinek Jellinek :Vienna and Hollabrunn Austria, Jellinek: Mährisch Ostrau: Moravia, Austrian Empire, Eckstein: Stanislau/Staniślawów/Ivan Frankirsk, Austro-Hungarian Empire, then Poland now Ukraine.	Haverford PA	Norman Schwartz Gurnick, Lazarovitch, Gamamick, Oxenhandler from Buki, Ukraine, Yarmelenitz from Ukraine	Philadelphia PA
Amy Levy Engel, Mikulince, Ptashkin from Odessa	E. Windsor NJ	Marvin Sclan Philadelphia PA Sklansky	
Lenora Perlmutter Shore, Brod, Fishman from Russia	Washington Crossing PA	Jan Solkov Solkov, Gunn, Poplavski from Vashinovka, Poland, Valchiska, Valma, Gebernick from Russia,	New Hope PA
		Sharon Wolman	Lititz PA

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**A**s I write this message we have just completed our fifth annual genealogy fair, which was held on Sunday June 14th at Congregations of Shaare Shmayim in the far northeast section of Philadelphia. Felicia Mode Alexander and Barry Wagner did an outstanding job of organizing over twenty stations to help educate and enlighten people on different areas of research. The fair attracted almost 100 attendees. See photo coverage by Gene Hurwitz on pp. 31 -33.

I want to bring you up to date on another exciting project. The Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center, a/k/a as PJAC, ([www.philajewisharchives.org](http://www.philajewisharchives.org)) has almost completed digitizing all the images from the Blitzstein, Rosenbaum, Lipschutz, and Rosenbluth immigrant bank records. Indexes will be online shortly. Many images are already online at no charge. In the meantime indexes can be found on [www.JewishGen.org](http://www.JewishGen.org). Many of you know that several years ago, our society, headed by Selma Neubauer, indexed these valuable records for the benefit of all researchers. In 2006 the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) cited this project as the Outstanding Project of the previous year. We are very proud of this work and are always looking for more volunteers to take on other projects. Cemetery records are a great source for researchers, and if you wish to volunteer, please contact me ([president@jgsgp.org](mailto:president@jgsgp.org)).

Here's an example of the power of one volunteer:

Back on May 15 the Godfrey Memorial Library posted a memorial tribute to an amazing volunteer, Ed Laput, who had spearheaded a massive project to photograph graves all over the state of Connecticut:

The Godfrey Library and the genealogy family lost a friend on Sunday when Ed Laput passed away after a five-year battle with multiple myeloma. Ed was a former board member at the library and the founder of the Ed Laput Collection, an effort to complete the monumental task of cataloguing and photographing the nearly 2,400 cemeteries in the state of Connecticut.

Ed's love for genealogy led him to start the cemetery project. He started out planning to document the cemeteries in Colchester, CT, where he lived, but it quickly expanded into surrounding towns and then into the whole state. Eventually

Ed began to build an army of volunteers to help him in taking the photographs and building the database. Ed stayed active in the project, continuing to take photographs and work on the database even as he battled cancer.

To date, the project has completed nearly 975 cemeteries that include over 300,000 photos and 360,000 names (*Reprinted with permission from Beth Mariotti, executive director of Goldfrey Memorial Library, Middletown, Connecticut*)

I will be attending the 35th annual IAJGS conference in Jerusalem and will report on that in my next message. ❖

*Fred Blum, President*

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## THE NEIDICH-NYDICK CONNECTION

By Susan Neidich



Unlike many of my colleagues in the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia whose interest in genealogy began perhaps a dozen or so years ago, my interest in my family's genealogy began when I was still a child.

What intrigued me was that my father's surname (and therefore, mine), NEIDICH, was so similar to my maternal grandmother's maiden name, which was NYDICK, essentially the same name. I was told that both the Nydicks and Neidiches came from Pinsk, located in today's Belarus (which was part of the Russian Empire before World War I, then part of Poland during the interwar period). I was also told the families were not related. When I was about eight years old, I decided that they had to have been related at one point, since they came from the same place and that I would find the link.

My paternal grandfather, Gad Asher (George Arthur) Neidich and his older brother, Moshe Aharon (Morris) immigrated to the U.S. in 1911 and 1902 respectively. Each later brought over his wife and children and resided in New York City. Gad Asher and Moshe Aharon and his wife died before I was born.

My entire extended Neidich family consisted of the descendants of these two brothers. Contact with my father's cousins and their children was limited to weddings and Bar Mitzvah celebrations and only for my father's generation. We did not visit them in their homes nor they in ours. In reality, my Neidich family really consisted of my father's three brothers, two sisters, their children and grandchildren.

There was no information forthcoming about my father's family when I asked questions. My father's older brothers and sister were children when they arrived in the U.S. My grandmother's attitude about life in Europe was simply, "It was bad. Why would you want to know about it?"

My mother's mother, Mollie Nydick, arrived in the U.S. with her mother and brother when she was five years old. Mollie was a member of a large immigrant family. Her parents were first cousins; their mothers were sisters. Between 1892 and 1900 not only did Mollie and her parents immigrate to the United States, but her father's four brothers, two sisters, and their parents as well. Mollie's mother's two brothers and sister also came to the U.S., as did the daughter of a deceased brother of Mollie's two grandmothers. Some of her mother's family settled in Detroit. The Nydicks settled in Philadelphia and New York.



Gad Asher (George Arthur) Neidich, ca. 1913

Mollie was the oldest of eight children, seven of whom married and had families. With one exception, every one of these relatives lived in the New York City metropolitan area throughout my childhood. We visited with these many cousins, aunts and uncles while I was growing up, and I came to know them.

When I was about fourteen years old, I asked my grandmother to write down her family tree. Mollie was able to name her four grandparents and one set of great grandparents as well as many aunts, uncles and cousins. This sheet of paper was the basis of my research for the next several decades.

In the early 1970s I organized the information I had. I wrote to many of my New York Nydick aunts, uncles and cousins, requesting pictures and information. I also contacted relatives in Detroit, Brooklyn and Philadelphia. I received updates of babies and marriages, heard stories and received a few treasured photographs. I typed the information gathered from all these sources into “tree form” and divided the family generationally and geographically. This was necessitated in part by the constraints of paper size and a manual typewriter. I created an album with labeled pictures of my Nydicks interspersed with family trees.

In 1975, while looking through the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, I came across an article about Gad Asher Levin, a philanthropist who had set up a school in Pinsk for the vocational training of orphans and poor boys. Since Gad Asher is not a common name, I wondered whether my father’s father, Gad Asher Neidich, had been named for him. If so, this most likely meant that his father, my great grandfather, Yaacov Neidich, was an orphan who had been trained in his school. I had no way of knowing whether or not this was true, but it seemed plausible to me.

In the late 1980s, I connected with a woman who was born Neidich, who searched in phone books for other people whose surnames were Neidich, Naidich, etc., then called or wrote to them. This woman’s grandfather was one of five brothers who were orphaned and split up in the late 19th century. She was looking for the descendants of the other brothers. She contended that she saw resemblances among the many far-flung Neidiches whom she met. My Nydicks and my Neidiches looked nothing alike; beginning with their coloring, my father and his siblings were all blue eyed and black haired, and my Nydick family for the most part brown eyed and brown haired. I had been told by more than one source that Israel Nydick had been a red head with a red beard.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, she organized several “reunions” of Neidiches/Naidiches, etc. which I attended. Initially I went to see whether any of the people she met looked like either side of my family, as well as to discover whether anyone could find a link among us. I saw no familiar looking faces from either side of my family. Many of the participants showed up with family trees, stories, and theories about the origin of the name (e.g. Neidich is from “No Daitch”, not German). No one ever found a connection linking him or her to another family tree. I was the only one who expressed skepticism that we were all related. However, I was the only one who had the name on both sides of her family.

In the mid 1990s I resided in the Philadelphia area and did some research at the National Archives, both in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. I discovered that the spelling of Neidich and Nydick had many variations on censuses and other documents. I came across known relatives in censuses, found relevant ship manifests on microfilm, and located my great great grandparents’ graves. I also joined the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia.

As I organized my material, I realized that my extensive Nydick family tree was really a Luttan (Lutchan) family tree into which Israel Nydick, my great great grandfather had married. Since he, his wife, and all six of their children had immigrated to the U.S., they had many descendants, but I had no information about Israel Nydick’s family of origin. That question brought me back to what my initial interest in my family tree had been--to find the connection between my Neidiches and my Nydicks.

Eventually what I did find was Alexander Beider’s *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Russian Empire* (Avotaynu, Teaneck, N.J., 1993) and *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Kingdom of Poland* (Avotaynu, Teaneck, N.J., 1996).

The *Russian Empire* entries read as follows: **Najdich** (common in Pinsk; Minsk, Cherkassy) N: NS: see **Najda** T: from the village Najda (Mozyr' d.) (Najdych)  
**Najda** (Novograd) N: foundling (Ukrainian) (Najdich, Na-Dene, Najdi, Najding), Najdis, Najdiman, Najdya, Najdych; Znajda (Znajde), Znaidin (Iznajdin).

The *Kingdom of Poland* entries read as follows:

**Najdek** (Radom) N: Najdek, najduk (Polish) foundling (see **Znajda**)

**Znajda** (Mazowieck) N: znajda (Polish) foundling (Znajder; Najden; Najda, Najder, Najdek, Najdak, Najdok, Najdycz, Najdyk, Najdzin (Najdzyn), Najdat (Majdat))

[The "N" above means a name based on personal characteristics. For Najdich, the characteristic is foundling.]

The most common derivation of the names Neidich and Nydick comes from the Ukrainian and Polish words for "foundling." I understood this as another piece of evidence that my decades old theory that YAACOV NEIDICH, my oldest Neidich ancestor, was an orphan and now, that ISRAEL NYDICK, the oldest Nydick ancestor I could trace, was possibly one too. They could have the same surname but not be related to one another. This could also explain

why no one attending any of the Neidich/Naidich etc. reunions ever found a connection to anyone else. The school Gad Asher Levin founded brought orphans and poor boys from all around the area to Pinsk. "Najdich" or some variant of it may have been the default surname for the school's students since many were orphans. This does not preclude, however, that no Neidich/Nydick was related, since several brothers could have ended up at the school and given the same "foundling" surname.

In 2007, I brought copies of these pages from the Beider dictionaries to a Neidich/Naidich reunion. The other participants liked the idea that we were all related and rejected the notion that we are descended from unrelated orphans.

Without empirical proof, people will believe what they want to believe. I was delighted to find probable confirmation of my decades old orphan theory. Therefore, I paid no attention to another possible meaning of Najdich -- "from the village of Najda." One of my brothers decided that we come from Najda, a small village not far from Pinsk. I have explained to no avail that I was always told we were from Pinsk; no one had ever mentioned Najda.

Nowadays there exists a way to find out who is related to whom -- DNA testing. However, for my Nydick-Neidich connection, I need direct male descendants from the male lines. The only direct male descendants of my Neidich grandfather are my brothers, who have both Nydick and Neidich



Israel & Basha Itta Nydick with daughters, Annie (Chana) (rear) and Lil (Leah) ca. 1898

genes. There are two possible direct males for my New York Nydicks, but the last time I was in contact with them was over forty years ago. Maybe there is a direct male descendant from my father's cousins. I may be able to find out through the internet. One of my brothers is willing to do the DNA testing (not the one who decided that we are from Najda).

After a lifetime of looking on and off for this Neidich-Nydick connection, it is possible that in the not too distant future I will have a definitive answer rather than just a plausible one. If not, I may find other tangents to research. The journey has certainly been an interesting one. ❖

Author Susan Neidich, JGSGP VP Membership, is researching Neidich/Nydick from Pinsk, Belarus and Eisenberg from Siedlce, Poland. Contact Susan at: [membership@jgsgp.org](mailto:membership@jgsgp.org)

# DISCOVERING MY BACKYARD

By Michael Jaron



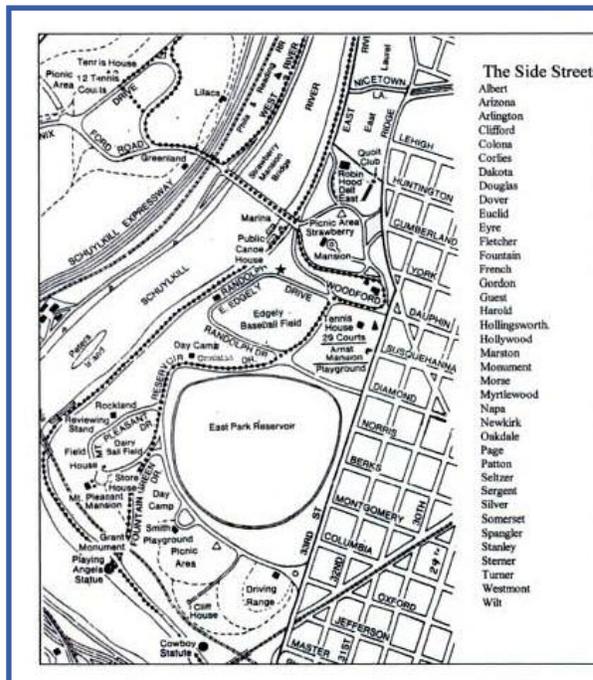
**P**reface: In the 1960s and '70s, an alternate view of the way to characterize history as the study of “top down” “great men and events” emerged in Europe and the United States. This alternate view, i.e., social history, (encompassing all aspects of the human experience), concentrated instead on the study of the social, economic, and cultural institutions that influenced the lives of everyday people. The methods and materials used in this approach were also different but will certainly be familiar to genealogists. Census data, city directories, wills, estate inventories, letters, diaries, newspapers, and oral histories were used as source materials in this approach and the data obtained from some of these sources were subjected to quantitative analyses.<sup>(1)</sup> We can then reasonably conclude that genealogy is social history.

I was enrolled in a graduate program in history in 1976, and while talking with my graduate advisor about my objectives, he remarked, “We often find what we are looking for in our own backyard.” Thirty-two years later in 2008, I recalled that comment when I made several discoveries about my family’s genealogy.

In 1989 I started the process toward earning a masters degree in library science. As part of a course about the history of information and its transmission, my fellow students and I were expected to give ten-minute presentations, just to give a “taste” of various topics. My assignment was Jewish information. At the outset of this course, the professor had also emphasized the “role of memory” in information and its transmission, so I chose to begin my presentation by writing my entire Hebrew name “Moshe Eliyahu” on the board. In so doing, I honored the memories of both my maternal grandfather, Moshe (Maurice) MACHLEDER/LEVY and my maternal grandmother Tillie (FARBMAN) MACHLEDER’s younger brother, Elia/Louis.

Let me now give you a “taste” of my backyard which encompasses more than a half century of memories (those experienced directly as well as those transmitted from generation to generation), information gathered in the social history tradition, and discoveries related to genetic genealogy and the surnames that figure prominently among my Family Finder matches. Many times while I was a student at the then Samuel S. Fels Junior High School in Philadelphia I would just stare at Har Nebo Cemetery across the street from Fels. At that time I knew that two generations of my family were buried there. Eventually, I learned that in fact, at least four generations are interred there. On a number of occasions my mother would take me to visit her father’s grave. These visits had a special quality about them as my mother would talk about her father. I somehow felt connected to his gravesite because I’m named for him. My mother told me that the original family surname was MACHLEDER but that my great grandfather, Asher, (Moshe’s father), had changed it to LEVY.

The only grandparent I ever knew was my maternal grandmother, Tillie (FARBMAN) MACHLEDER/LEVY. She lived on 33rd Street near Diamond Street in the Strawberry Mansion section of Philadelphia. Originally, the house was owned by her parents, Asher Yitzchok and Sheyna (SIGMAN) FARBMAN. I remember that house as a center of family activity up to the late

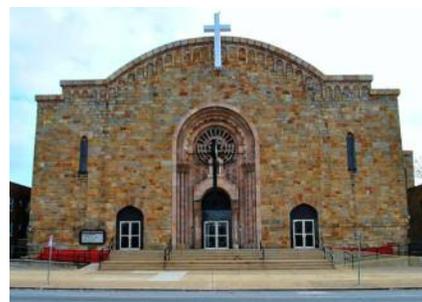


## Strawberry Mansion

A section in North Philadelphia, high on the banks of the Schuylkill River, was settled as a Jewish neighborhood in the early 20th century. The neighborhood boundaries extended from Thirty-third Street, adjacent to Fairmount Park, eastward beyond Twenty-ninth Street. The section ran north to south from Lehigh Avenue down to Oxford Street. The community divided itself into three segments that consisted of the lower end (below Berks Street), the middle section (from Norris Street to Dauphin Street), and the upper portion of the neighborhood (spread out above York Street to Lehigh Avenue).

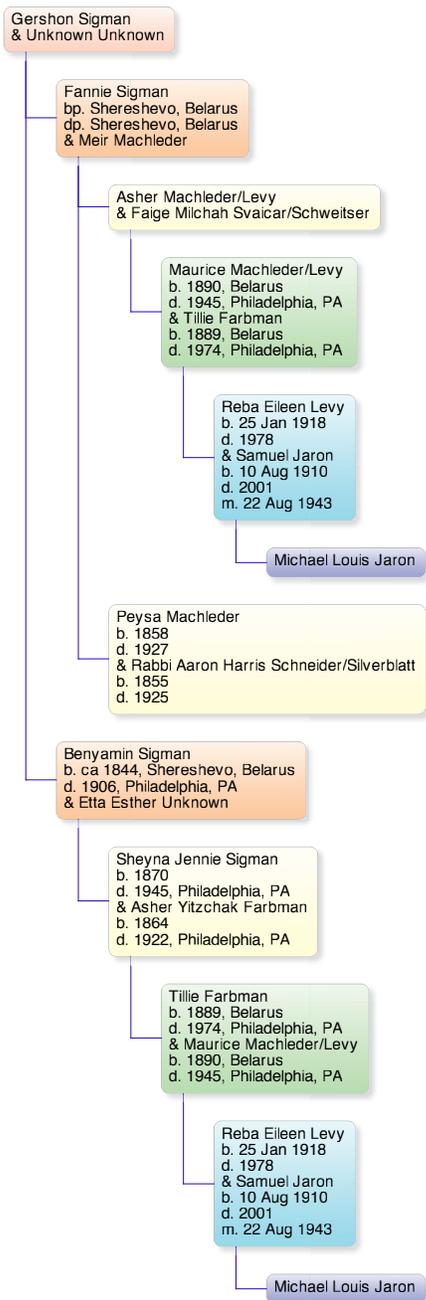
1950s. Among my fondest memories is walking the two blocks to B'nai Jeshurun with my mother's brothers and my cousins. Part of that child's memory was a warm feeling during the services. Are you beginning to see "my backyard"?

One of the stories I was told was that my grandparents, Moshe/Maurice MACHLEDER/LEVY and Tillie FARBMAN came over together as children accompanied by their mothers in 1898. My great grandmother Sheyna was a cousin to my grandfather directly through his grandmother, Fannie (SIGMAN) MACHLEDER/LEVY. This grandmother was a sister of Sheyna's father, Benyamin SIGMAN. (See abridged family tree below). The MACHLEDERS settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts. However, sometime between 1912 and 1914, my grandfather left New Bedford to escape the prospects of an arranged marriage. He went to Philadelphia in search of his FARBMAN cousins. This was how he (re)met and married my grandmother.



Formerly B'nai Jeshurun, 2117 North 33rd Street (north of Diamond Street), Philadelphia

### Gershon Sigman - Abridged Descendent Chart



Other members of the MACHLEDER family remained in New Bedford. One of these was my great grandfather, Asher Anshel MACHLEDER, who had eight sisters. One of them married Aaron Harris SILVERBLATT whose original surname was SCHNEIDER, and was, like my maternal branches, from a *shtetl* called Shereshvevo in what is now Belarus. In 2008 I discovered that Aaron was the first rabbi of the first *shul* (synagogue) in New Bedford.

In the late 1990s I discovered JewishGen and shortly afterward, I found an off-shoot group, CHILDREN of PRUZHANY and SURROUNDING AREA (CPSA). I also found their two websites, one no longer online, that included various revision lists, and I felt inspired to copy and paste selected entries from it. The earliest one is from around 1806 and included the surnames SIGMAN and FARBMAN. Thus far I have found connections to a least five other surnames whereby two others are of special significance – OLKES and PINSKY.

The other CPSA website <http://cpsa.info/> also includes an Interest Index where I found another researcher by the name of Carol Cosson, who is also a member of JGSGP. Her surnames of interest are GURALNICK and ZURITSKY along with the town of Shereshvevo. Thanks to Carol I found another branch of the MACHLEDER tree. My great grandfather's brother, also named Moshe MACHLEDER married Chaya ZURITSKY. Four of their eleven children (Judal/Julius, Israel/Erwin, Shmuel/Samuel, and Bubla/Beatrice) immigrated

to the U.S. separately. The manifest for at least one of them shows that Chaya paid the passage; the contact person for at least one is shown as their uncle, Isidore GURALNICK who was married to Anna ZURITSKY (Chaya's sister) – Carol Cosson's grandparents!!

According to another family story my great grandfather's brother (the Moshe MACHLEDER mentioned in the previous paragraph) changed the surname to MARKS or MARX. I eventually learned that it was not he who changed the surname, but rather his four children who had immigrated. Unfortunately, their seven other siblings who remained in Europe perished in the Shoah. I was able to identify one of these seven through JewishGen's Holocaust database. His name was Leiba, and the database shows his parents as Moshe and Chaya. It also showed that he was married to Sheyna TENNENBAUM. Interestingly both the ZURITSKY and TENNENBAUM surnames appear as X-matches in my Family Finder.

During a visit three years ago with my wife and older son to Philadelphia's National Museum of American Jewish History I learned about another potential connection to the B'nai Jeshurun of my childhood. According to Allen Meyers' *The Jews of North Philadelphia* B'nai Jeshurun was founded around the time that my grandparents were married, and one of its past rabbis was named PICKHOLTZ. This is another surname that figures prominently among my Family Finder mtDNA and X-Matches. Could it be that portions of my family were involved in the founding of B'nai Jeshurun as they had been in the founding of the shul in New Bedford?

Although my primary focus has involved the MACHLEDER surname, I've uncovered evidence that it may actually have originally been, OLKES. Other surnames of primary significance include FARBMAN, SIGMAN, SVAICAR, and SHEINES. I will eventually explore how these and yet other peripheral surnames may be specifically connected to my family as I continue to focus on "my backyard". ❖

*Reference: 1) U.S. Social History - Bibliography - Historians, Methods, Cultural, and Political - JRank Articles <http://science.jrank.org/pages/8087/Social-History-U-S.html#ixzz3ftyHty>*

*Born in Philadelphia, author Michael Jaron moved to Pittsburgh in 1972 to attend University of Pittsburgh, where he earned a BA in History and an MA in Library Science. He's been actively researching for more than fifteen years. His grandparents' surnames are: YUROVSKY, WERNICK, MACHLEDER/LEVY, and FARBMAN. Contact Michael at: [mljaron49@gmail.com](mailto:mljaron49@gmail.com)*

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## JEWISH NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS OF THE GREATER PHILADELPHIA REGION



*Acquired by Temple University Libraries' Special Collections Research Center in 2009, the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Collection documents the activities of the Greater Philadelphia Jewish community through the personal papers of civic and spiritual leaders and the records of cultural, educational, religious, and social service organizations established and operated by and for the Jewish community. Among the records, are regional Jewish community newspapers and periodicals published in Philadelphia and its suburbs and Southern New Jersey.*

Local and regional newspapers and periodicals often contain notices of various life cycle events including births, bar mitzvahs, engagements, marriages, deaths, and burials of members of the Jewish community in and around Philadelphia as well as information on organizations, businesses, historical events, and topics. The bulk of the Jewish newspapers housed at the SCRC are printed in English with a few titles in Yiddish. Depending on the title, newspapers and periodicals are accessible in print, on microfilm, or via subscription databases. All formats can be accessed in the SCRC reading room. Please contact SCRC reference staff for more information.

1. Filadelfier Forverts = Philadelphia Forward (Philadelphia, PA)  
Issues on microfilm available: September 1903-June 1947
2. Filadelfier Idisher Herald = The Philadelphia Jewish Herald (Philadelphia, PA)  
Issues on microfilm available: April-November 1913
3. Filadelfier Morgen Tseytung = Philadelphia Jewish Morning News (Philadelphia, PA) Issues on microfilm available: January-April 1907
4. Inside (Philadelphia, PA)  
Print issues available: 1980-2015 (scattered issues missing); issues available via database: 1994-2015
5. The Jewish Exponent (Philadelphia, PA)  
Print issues available: October 1887-2015 (1903-1910, 1917-1925, 1929-1944, and scattered issues missing); issues available via database: April 15, 1887-2015 (1913, 1923, 1927, 1956-1969, and scattered issues missing, no obituaries in database for 1991 forward)
6. Jewish Times of South Jersey (Pleasantville, NJ)  
Print issues available: April 28, 2000-2004 (scattered issues missing). Earlier titles: Jewish Times of the South Jersey Seashore print issues available: January 1997-April 14, 2000 (scattered issues missing); The Jewish Record (Atlantic City, NJ) print issues available: November 24, 1939-December 27, 1996 (scattered issues missing)
7. The Jewish Record (Philadelphia, PA)  
Print issues available: May 14, 1875-March 29, 1878
8. Main Line Jewish Expression (Bala Cynwyd, PA)  
Print issues available: February 2, 1978-December 20, 1979
9. Pennsylvania Jewish Life Magazine (Reading, PA)  
Print issues available: October 1967-May 1977 (scattered issues missing)
10. Jewish Times (Philadelphia, PA)  
Print issues available: October 27, 1983-March 9, 1995. Earlier title: The Jewish Times of the Greater Northeast print issues available: March 31, 1976-October 20, 1983 The Jewish Times print issues available: July 5, 1973-December 27, 1973; The Philadelphia Jewish Times print issues available: October 17, 1947-June 28, 1973; microfilm issues available: October 17, 1947-December 26, 1968; The Jewish Times print and microfilm issues available: June 23, 1933-October 10, 1947; The Philadelphia Jewish Times print and microfilm issues available: April 30, 1926-June 16, 1933

A complete inventory of available newspaper and periodical titles with publisher information is also available in the online finding aid <http://library.temple.edu/scrc/jewish-newspapers-and>

#### Research Requests

The SCRC reading room is located on the ground floor of Temple University's Paley Library and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Due to the unique, rare, valuable and often fragile nature of the items in our collection, the use of these materials often requires advance notice for retrieval which can be done online using your SCRC Researcher Account <https://temple.aeon.atlas-sys.com/logon>

For general inquiries or questions about setting up your SCRC Researcher Account email [scrc@temple.edu](mailto:scrc@temple.edu) or call (215) 204-8257. ❖

# ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MY WEBSITE (WWW.SHOAHLETTERS.ORG):

## “LETTERS, DOCUMENTS AND IMAGES OF THE JELLINEK FAMILY CONFRONTING THE HOLOCAUST”

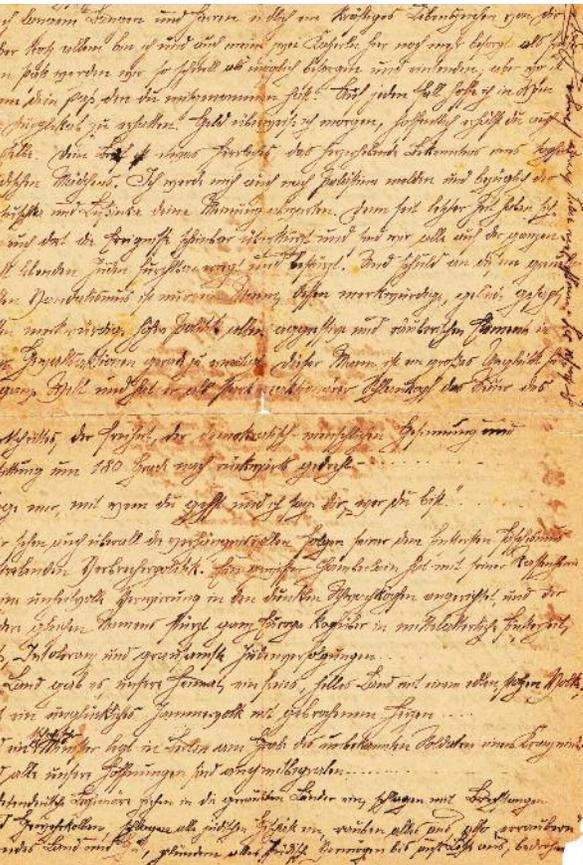
by Paulette Jellinek



The material on [www.ShoahLetters.org](http://www.ShoahLetters.org) presents the tragic saga of twenty-one of my closest relatives (my parents, grandparents, paternal aunts, uncles, first cousins) struggling to cope with increasing Nazi persecution and to escape from it. Eleven of these twenty-one good people could not escape and thus became eleven of the Six Million.

The sixty-four poignant, revealing letters and primary documents that my dear first cousin, Gisella Nadja Jellinek Gal, hereafter referred to as Nadja, gave me personally in 1999, provided the fundamental content and impetus for this website. Nadja had received these letters, in then-Palestine between July 1938 and June 1941, from members of our family who were trapped in Vienna, Hollabrunn and Brno, as well as from those who had managed to escape to New York City and Sydney, Australia. A former school friend of my aunt Gisela, who lived in Yugoslavia, served as a disguised conduit for the letters from Austria to Palestine.

Nadja's June 1938 clandestine and hazardous journey with her Betar Zionist youth group, from Vienna to Piraeus and from Piraeus to British Mandate Palestine on an *Af-Al-Pi* (Despite) ship, is described in a little more detail on Nadja's biography page on the website. I was fortunate to get to know, admire and have a close relationship with Nadja, between 1971 - 1974, when I lived and taught art in Israel. It was during my week's visit alone with Nadja in 1999 that she gave me almost all the original Jellinek family Shoah letters. She had cried and mourned over these letters since 1944 when she learned of the Nazi murders of her father, his new wife, her sisters, aunts and uncles.



In 2010 I discovered, in my sister Michaela's attic, sixteen more letters that my parents had received in New York City between 1939 - 1941 from Shanghai and Lwów, as well as from Vienna, Sydney and Brno.

As I wrote in the website's Introduction about all of this rare epistolary evidence: “The personal voices of individual human beings before they were silenced by the Nazis are the only voices that the world can ever ‘hear’ directly from these family members/victims of the Shoah.”

### Translation and Transcription

The letters are in German. Some were typed; others were handwritten in modern German script, and some in the obsolete Sütterlin script. I relied on professional and nonprofessional German-to-English translators, even though the German I knew from hearing my parents and

Page 1 of my uncle, Hugo Jellinek's, letter to his daughter, Gisella Nadja, October 14, 1938.

On this page and into the third page of this letter, Hugo expresses outrage and despair regarding the disastrous betrayals and appeasement at the Munich Conference and the ensuing brutal persecution of Jewish and non-Jewish Czechs in the ceded Sudeten region. An English translation and a transcription into modern German letters appears in the Letters section of the website.

relatives speak when I was growing up enabled me to get some sense of the typed German. It has not been easy to find really good translators who are able to both sensitively render each letter writer's individual voice as well as 1930s-1940s Austrian usage and idiom into corresponding English. Many of the translations have been edited to improve the English tone and usage as well as to decipher a word or phrase that the first translator missed.

Information on which of the multiple individual professional and nonprofessional translators, editors and transcribers worked on a letter accompanies each letter on the site. Two organizations that have been helpful are the Leo Baeck Institute, ". . . devoted to the study of the history and culture of German-speaking Jewry," in New York City and Sütterlinstube (founded in 1996 as a local working group to transfer old documents from German to Latin script) in Hamburg Germany.

#### Items that Provide Background for the Twenty-Four Letters Currently on the Site:

- Biographical information and photos of thirty-five family members;

Portrait photo of my uncle, Siegfried Jellinek,  
Lwów, January 1941.



This photo reveals, in a searingly powerful way, Siegfried's disillusionment, grief, suffering, aloneness and dignity. This is the only extant photo of a Jellinek family member taken while the deportations and horrific conditions leading to his or her death were in process and after the person's probable understanding that there would be no escape.

Portrait photo of my first cousin, Berta Jellinek,  
Brno, February 1939.



This small portrait photo shows Berta at about 16 1/2 years old, with an open, wistful and gently smiling expression. It is impossible to fathom that Berta, her younger sister, Anna, and 1.5 million other young people were murdered during the Holocaust; death in Auschwitz came for Berta approximately 3 1/4 years after this photo was warmly dedicated and mailed by her from Brno, Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia, to her uncle, Karl, aunt Kreindel/Karla and baby cousin, Michaela, in New York City.

- A Jellinek family tree showing the relationships of the chief letter writers and recipients, 1938-1946;
- Eight primary documents, including: each of my parents' 1939 Nazi-issued passports, the April 1938 Nazi-required Asset Inventory completed by my aunt and uncle; my maternal grandmother's Asset Declaration required by the Nazi regime prior to her deportation to Izbica (a Jewish ghetto created by Nazi Germany in Izbica in occupied Poland during World War II which served as a transfer point for deportation of Jews from Poland, Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia to Bełżec and Sobibór extermination camps) in April 1942;
- Twenty-four historic family photos and two of my related paintings/collages;
- Three schematic maps showing family members' locations in a) pre-Anschluss Austria, b) late October 1939, and c) their ultimate fates between the end of June 1941 and January 1943;
- A list of sources including websites, archives, books on Jewish lives during the pre-Nazi and Nazi eras, personal memoirs and/or historical narratives of particular relevance to the Jellinek family's experiences, literary works, other collections of Shoah letters.

#### Significant Avenues of My Research

(N.B. the Austria-Czech Special Interest Group of Jewish Gen suggests several of these same sources).

- Unpublished written and spoken communication with Nadja, in Rishon Le Zion, Israel, over the course of many days and years.

- Reading entire books and relevant parts of books and websites -- listed in the Sources section of my website.
- Visits to and written responses from archives in Vienna, including the Vienna Provincial and Municipal Archives, the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien (The Jewish Community, Vienna), the Austrian State Archives, the War Department of the Austrian State Archives, the Documentation Archive of Austrian Resistance, and the Law Faculty Archives of the University of Vienna;
- Visit to the site of my paternal grandparents' combined synagogue and home in the small town of Hollabrunn, northwest of Vienna, and speaking with Ms. Luckerbauer, the current resident of the house next door.
- Visits to Shoah and Jewish historical museums, including Yad Vashem, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the museum and site of the Theresienstadt concentration camp, the Jewish Museum in New York City, the Shoah Memorial in Paris and the Jewish Museum, Vienna.



### Webmaster

I work with a very bright and talented young man, (who wishes to remain anonymous), who codes, posts and occasionally edits the material that I submit to him via the internet. He has also offered creative ideas for the site's design.

I hope that this article has been of interest, but above all, that it has inspired you to look at the original primary and secondary source material as well as the results of my research and development processes found in the website itself! Please also continue to check back from time to time, because I am continuing to gradually add to the letters, images, primary documents and sources currently on the site.

Pp. 1 & 2 of my mother, Kreindel E. Jellinek's passport, issued by the Nazi regime in January 1939.

Together with the United States-issued Immigration Visas on pp. 30-31, this 5" x 3.5" booklet enabled Kreindel (aka Karla and Caroline) Jellinek, and her daughter, Michaela, to escape from Nazi-annexed Austria to the United States and thus save their lives.

Note the Nazi symbol of the eagle on top of a swastika, which appears throughout the passport, and the red "J" standing for "Jew" on p. 1.

I welcome all of your responses--be they inquiries, suggestions, or comments--either through the contact page on my website, [www.ShoahLetters.org](http://www.ShoahLetters.org) or directly to my email: [paulette.jellinek@gmail.com](mailto:paulette.jellinek@gmail.com). ❖

*New member, Paulette Jellinek, is researching the following family names: JELLINEK - Vienna and Hollabrunn (Austria), Mährisch Ostrau (Moravia, Austrian Empire) and ECKSTEIN - Stanislau (Galicia, Austrian Empire), Stanisławów (interwar, Poland).*

*Photo of Paulette Jellinek by Jan L. Apple*

## REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR FLASH DRIVE

by James Gross, MLIS



**T**his short tech tip is featured to assist those researchers who devote time to visiting research facilities. Our time is valuable; there are always other things we could be doing. I have a very easy suggestion with regard to your flash drive: bring it!

As a reference volunteer, I occasionally see researchers who run into the archive to do some quick research. You would be amazed at the number of researchers who forget their flash drive. While I know some researchers prefer hard copies, it is still useful to bring a flash drive on all your research trips.

First, always make sure you bring the flash drive with you. Second, throw an extra one in your car, backpack, purse, or suitcase. Third, if you have time, copy your computer files or the computer folders to the flash drive. This will help you identify what files you already have and help you narrow down what files or topics you wish to work on.

Fourth, back up all of your flash drive files onto a separate drive or storage medium in case your flash drive stops working.



While these simple tips will not guarantee that you'll locate that elusive record, they will at least help ensure that you have a media storage device with which to copy and save the records you do find. ❖

*Author James Gross has been working on his family tree since the early 1990s. A periodic contributor to various genealogy newsletters, James volunteers regularly at the Cherry Hill, NJ Family History Center where he helps other genealogists in their research. He also has a genealogy website: <http://tinyurl.com/gross-steinberg>. James can be reached at: [navistar96@yahoo.com](mailto:navistar96@yahoo.com)*

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## HOW AN ARTICLE IN CHRONICLES HELPED ME BREAK THROUGH A BRICK WALL

By Shelda Carol Bachin Sandler



**M**any years ago (I do not remember exactly how long ago, but it was a very l-o-n-g time ago), I was searching for the cemetery and burial location of a stillborn baby which my maternal great grandmother had delivered in 1896. Armed only with the names of my great grandparents (Charles and Fannie Newfeld), and information older relatives had given me, I began my search.

I was able to verify the above information on a form entitled "Physician's Certificate of a Death in the City of Philadelphia." I also found this information on a Philadelphia City death certificate which I located on Family Search, <https://familysearch.org>. The physician's certificate also indicated the date of burial, the cemetery name, and the county in which it was located but I was confused by some of that information: "Har[?] Halzey C.. Merion Sqr., Mont. Co. Pa."

Since I was unfamiliar with this cemetery name, I reached for my copy of the *Philadelphia Area Jewish Genealogical*

*Resource Directory* that Steve Schecter (z"l) and his committee developed for the 2009 Philadelphia-IAJGS conference. In the section entitled "Pennsylvania-Philadelphia Area-Inactive Jewish Cemeteries" I located an entry for the "Gladwyne Jewish Cemetery (1860 - 1910) (Aka: Har Hazetim Cemetery/Chevra Kadusha Cemetery)." Had I finally located the cemetery where my great-grandparents' stillborn daughter was buried?

After making some telephone calls I learned that Beth David Reform Congregation in Gladwyne was somehow involved with this cemetery. I also received the disheartening information that the cemetery was in great disrepair, and it would be very difficult to navigate one's way on the grounds to find a particular grave. In addition, I had very little hope that I would find any kind of marker indicating the precise gravesite. There were no living relatives then who might be able to give me any further information. That ended my search...or so I thought!

Fast-forward to the Spring 2015 issue of *Chronicles* (Volume 32-1, pp. 7-10) and the article entitled "A New Era for an Abandoned Cemetery" by Rachael Griffith with Jill Cooper. The authors write about the Gladwyne Jewish Memorial Cemetery, also known as Har Hasetim!! The "Har[?] Halzey C" reference on my original source document was a poor transliteration of the words "Har Hasetim." After reading the article and learning about Beth David Reform Congregation's current involvement in restoring this cemetery, it all came together for me. I truly believe I've finally found the cemetery which contains the final resting place of my great grandparents' stillborn baby girl. Had this baby lived, she would have been my great-aunt and my maternal grandmother's sister. ❖

19965

RETURN OF A DEATH  
IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.  
PHYSICIAN'S CERTIFICATE.

1. Name of Deceased, Nameless Child Mrs. Chas. Newfield.  
2. Color, White.  
3. Sex, Female.  
4. Age, Stillborn.  
5. Marital or Single,  
6. Date of Death, Mar. 20 '96.  
7. Cause of Death, Stillborn.

Chas. H. Reckfus, Jr. M. D.  
Residence, 506 N. 6th St.,

UNDERTAKER'S CERTIFICATE IN RELATION TO DECEASED.

8. Occupation,  
9. Place of Birth, Phila  
10. When a Minor, { Name of Father, Chas  
Name of Mother, Fannie  
11. Ward,  
12. Street and Number, 917 N. 3rd  
13. Date of Burial, March 22, 96  
14. Place of Burial, W. Hazey Cemetery Sq. Mont. Co. Pa.  
By PRIVATE CONVEYANCE ONLY M. Goldman, Undertaker.  
Residence, 338 South St.

This constitutes one Certificate. To be returned, by the Superintendent of Cemetery, to Health Office on Saturday of each week, before 12 M.

Physician's Certificate of a Death - Baby Newfield

*Shelda Carol Bachin Sandler is co-chair of JGSGP's Speakers Bureau. She was also Hospitality co-chair at the 2009 IAJGS-Philadelphia conference, co-chaired our first Genealogy Fair in June 2011, and is a frequent contributor to "Chronicles." You can reach Shelda at: stanshel@msn.com*

## THREE GENERATIONS OF THE ELLISON FAMILY EXPLORE ISRAEL AND BOND

by Elaine Ellison



When our family agreed to visit Israel with us, we, the grandparents, were delighted. Our two children, their spouses, and four grandchildren would travel during the 2014 winter school break. Shira, our oldest grandchild, 19, a university student, hails from the Philadelphia area. Matthew, 16, Daniel, 13, and Nathan, 9, and their parents live in Vermont. After we completed our plans between April and June 2014, the Gaza – Israeli war that began in July gave us sleepless nights. However, we continued to feel positive that Israel authorities would not allow travel to unsafe places.

Suddenly, I woke up in the middle of one night wondering: ‘Would all of us be friends or enemies at the end of this togetherness? On the other hand, twelve days together could cement lasting family relationships. Yes, we would go to Israel!’ The travel company, Israel Experts, helped us plan our trip with flexibility to visit places from the far north in the Golan Heights to the south in the Negev. We wanted our family to learn about cousins who lived in those areas after they made *aliyah* (immigration to Israel).

We landed in Tel Aviv on December 23, but what we saw did not look like the Tel Aviv of the 1990s when the Shalom Tower rose above all the other buildings in the city. Now, skyscrapers dominate the skyline. With our guide Shachar accompanying us in our bus, we toured throughout the area, then headed north to Haifa, Caesarea, and Acre where we visited an ancient Crusader village. At the Knights Hall, the Crusaders’ royal palace, we were mesmerized by the video we watched depicting the lifestyle of the times. We interacted in the city with Arabs and Jews living there.

Our destination that night was the kibbutz Kfar Giladi on the Israel-Lebanon border. This is where my cousin Percy (Pesach) “Pussy” Tolchinsky lived during the 1948 war. I remember my mother’s excitement and pride telling our family about him. “Pussy” was a pilot, her cousin, and the grandson of her father’s brother Pacie (Pesach). He was so daring to escape injury while serving in the Israeli Defense Forces that people said he had nine lives, like a cat. Kfar Giladi’s lovely guest facilities and beautiful grounds, good food in the dining hall and friendly residents made us feel welcome. We met with a family friend, born in the kibbutz, who gave us limited information about “Pussy” Toll. She said he was a true hero who flew many missions during the 1948 War of Independence.



Percy (Pesach)  
“Pussy” Tolchinsky

Based on information on a website ([www.machal.org.il](http://www.machal.org.il)) called *World Machal*, which is an acronym for the Hebrew, “Mitnadvei Chutz L’Aretz”, meaning “Volunteers from Overseas,” I found excellent information about my cousin written by Eddy Kaplansky in the summer 2002 edition of *American Veterans of Israel Newsletter*. Percy lived in New York and joined Habonim (“the builders” which is a Jewish Socialist-Zionist cultural youth movement that began in Great Britain in 1929 and later spread to all English speaking countries) as a teenager in the 1930s and became a committed Zionist. He learned to fly after he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942, served in the South Pacific as a pilot, and was considered a war hero there.

He wanted to make aliyah after his discharge in 1945, and the Tel Aviv airline offered him a job. At that time Britain oversaw Palestine and restricted Jewish immigration. He received a passport valid for travel to Egypt and Palestine. When he reached Alexandria, Egypt on a Swedish cargo ship, he jumped ship, and members of the Jewish Brigade cleared him to travel to Tel Aviv. He first lived at Kfar Blum and joined the American and Canadian Habonim there. When he married, he moved to Kfar Giladi.

In 1948 he joined the Haganah’s (“The Defense”, a Jewish paramilitary organization in what was then the British Mandate of Palestine from 1920 to 1948, which later evolved into the Israel Defense Forces) Aleph (First) Squadron and flew light planes on risky missions. When DC3 planes were added, he flew them too. Once an Egyptian Spitfire attacked him and a mechanic in a DC3 plane. He scrambled to safety, but bullets had made holes in the plane. The plane was repaired and two days later, he rescued sixty people north of the Dead Sea area while Arab Legion tanks raced towards their kibbutz. The plane was overloaded, but it became airborne near the Dead Sea and climbed to safety. “Pussy” flew missions to help airlift Jews from Czechoslovakia to Israel. Once, he, co-pilot Eddy Kaplansky, and a number of Israel Air Force headquarter members flew to a location twenty miles north of today’s Eilat where they retrieved five tons of surplus land mines. The plane’s left engine suddenly lost power and the plane crashed and caught fire. The crew and passengers escaped certain death thanks to an unexpected dune at the point of impact. “Pussy” has been remembered as a very levelheaded pilot. Unfortunately, I never met him, but I did meet his sister Eleanor when I was twelve years old. She visited my mother and announced she was ready to make *aliyah*. “There are no appliances in Israel,” she said. “I’m sending a refrigerator, a stove and a washing machine over. And lots of equipment I want for

starting a business. It's going to be a beauty shop".

We said our "good-byes" to Kfar Giladi and drove to a viewpoint where we could see white smoke clouds after hearing blasts in the far valley of Lebanon. We drove through the beautiful Golan Heights, viewing the snows on Mount Hermon, the Syrian Hills, and Quneitra in the valley beyond the Israeli fields. U.N. soldiers are stationed at Mount Bental. Old tank parts from the Yom Kippur War remain there as sculptures. All of us felt the significance of this place while watching the U.N. soldiers at their posts.

We continued to spend a long afternoon in Tsfat visiting ancient synagogues, marveling at the numerous posters of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Brooklyn's Rabbi Schneerson, and walking among the American Birthright (a not-for-profit educational organization that sponsors free ten-day heritage trips to Israel for Jewish young adults, aged 18–26) groups and local Hasidic families. We later reached Beit Shean where my husband and I had participated in an archeological dig in 1992. The family was in awe of the Roman city, the amphitheater, hippodrome and agora with shop areas exposed.

After two wonderful days at the Dead Sea resort floating in the lowest waters on earth, we realized that family togetherness was possible, and everyone continued to have fun. Masada, the next stop, became the "best" for the grandkids who climbed the snake path to the top. The Roman baths, the Roman ramparts, the world history here presented good opportunities for questions and conversation among our group.

We finally reached Beer Sheva where we would meet cousins, Judy and Mitzi. I have known these women since they were born in Harrisburg. My mother and their grandfather were brother and sister, part of a family of nine siblings, all born in the Ukraine. My mother and her brother had children in America who were close in age. I am the youngest child of all the first generation American children in the family, so I am closer in age to the grandchildren. My uncle's grandchildren have been especially close. Judy, Mitzi, and their brothers, Dennis, and Jerry, were raised with the idea that Israel would be the place they should live, and each made aliyah with their husbands and wives after graduating from college. We have visited them each time we were in Israel.



**Elaine's cousins Mitzi (wearing black top in center), her husband (to her right), children, grandchildren**

This time our children and grandchildren would meet Judy and Mitzi. Their two brothers do not live nearby. Judy has seven children and fourteen grandchildren, while Mitzi has four children and nine grandchildren. We arranged to meet at the Grand Canyon Mall in Beer Sheva which is the newest mall and larger than the King of Prussia Mall locally. After meeting Judy, Mitzi, their spouses, Judy's oldest son Avi, and his brother, Yoram, in the food court we all had dinner together. We talked about family here in the States and reviewed the names of all the children and grandchildren in Israel. The two women have been teachers of Hebrew and English, which they call "Heblish" and have helped to resettle others who made *aliyah* from America. Their father continues to live in Harrisburg, but their mother, my first cousin, Ruth, has passed away.

We ended our journey in Jerusalem for three days of excellent visits to the Western Wall, walking the Old City walls, Mount Zion, the Holy Sepulcher, through the restored Jewish Quarter, the Roman Cardo, and touring the tunnels underneath the Western Wall. We visited Yad Vashem (Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust), the artisan shop at Yad LaKashish (Lifeline for the Elderly a non-profit organization empowering and supporting nearly 300 elderly Jerusalem residents on a daily basis), where my nine-year-old grandson chose his *kippah* (ritual skullcap or

yarmulke), *tallit* (ritual prayer shawl) and *tallit* bag for his Bar Mitzvah. On our last day, January 1, 2015, our personal fulfillment of “Next Year in Jerusalem”, we descended into the ancient foundation of King David’s Jerusalem. Here we journeyed between ancient shafts, walls and fortresses where Jerusalem was born. We made our last visit to the Western Wall, ending the day at the Shrine of the Book with its Dead Sea Scrolls and the magnificent exhibits throughout the adjacent Israel Museum.

Getting ready for our flight back home, we took a poll of the children and grandchildren. “Did they have a wonderful time? Did all of us cooperate and express our feelings about the places we visited? Did we like each other as a family traveling together? Would we do it again if we had the opportunity?” The answers were a resounding “YES”! ❖

*JGSGP member, Elaine Ellison, also serves on the "Chronicles" editorial team. She is the co-author of "Voices from Marshall Street, Jewish Life in a Philadelphia Neighborhood 1920-1960." Contact Elaine at [ekellison@navpoint.com](mailto:ekellison@navpoint.com)*

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## HOLOCAUST RELATED RESEARCH

by Felicia Mode Alexander, M.Ed.

### Historical Perspective



When I started doing genealogy research in 1984, my father was my primary source of anecdotal information. At that time he was seventy years old with a fantastic memory. I still cherish the time we spent going to various archives and repositories in Boston. We chatted about many topics related to our family's rich history, some of which I have shared in previous articles for *Chronicles*. However, when I asked Dad about the Holocaust, he quickly stated that our entire family had been in America since the 1800's, thus the Shoah did not directly impact us. There was no way to support or refute his claim at that time. After all, in 1984 our home computer had a small green screen, and we used those big, old floppy disks! There were no online sources or databases through which I could conduct any Holocaust research, let alone look for potential relatives.

Fast forward to 2015. The whole field of Holocaust research has been transformed by access to the internet and increased interest in studying the Holocaust. My family narrative and my own career trajectory as a teacher were significantly impacted once I started to use searchable Holocaust databases and indices to existing repositories. American researchers of Jewish genealogy should seriously consider pursuing Holocaust research. In 1984, I could never have imagined how new and evolving research would change my life. Today, I am a Museum Teacher Fellow of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). I have written articles, published teaching materials and taught units on the Holocaust for many years and have studied/traveled to Holocaust sites all over Europe and in Israel. Recently, I brought a colleague, who is an adult child of Holocaust survivors, on my class trip to the USHMM in Washington D.C. (*see next section*). Her parents had never shared details of their experiences with my friend or other family members. Out of respect for her parents, questions were never asked. Now that they are deceased, she wondered whether I could help her discover anything about them at the museum. The research staff there provided a goldmine of information, and she left that day with a file folder of documents, illustrating a tale of survival to which she had never been privy, including multiple concentration camps (including Auschwitz), ghettos and Displaced Persons camps. None of the information she had acquired would have been possible without the research afforded us by databases, the internet and sophisticated search engines.

In the rest of this article I will share four important sites that may help researchers trying to find family members impacted by the Holocaust. Perhaps not everyone came to America in the 1800's, and perhaps the Holocaust did indeed

impact your extended family. Like me, you might experience the great joy in discovering a previously unknown branch of your family tree. In my case, relatives from that branch found refuge from the nightmare of the Holocaust first in England and then through *aliyah* (immigration to Israel)! How I found these Israeli cousins, the fate of the rest of their family and what has happened since will be the subject of an article in the next issue of *Chronicles*!

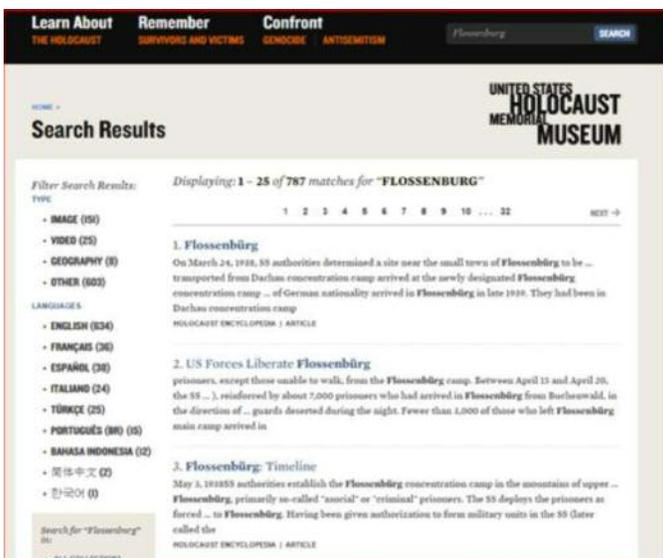
## Yad Vashem

The scholarly field of Holocaust research was very young when the grandfather of all Holocaust memorial/research sites, Yad Vashem, was created in Jerusalem. According to its website, "Established in 1953, as the world center for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust, Yad Vashem is today a dynamic and vital place of intergenerational and international encounter." The Pages of Testimony, given by survivors in hopes of locating lost friends and relatives, are housed at Yad Vashem. For decades, these important documents, which include photographs, addresses and other important facts, were only available in hard copy at Yad Vashem. All of this changed when the online searchable Pages of Testimony were released with limited access during the 2003 IAJGS conference in Washington D.C. as a pilot program and eventually moved online in searchable form for all researchers in 2004. Today, the Pages of Testimony are but one part of Yad Vashem's online Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names. There are also Deportation Lists and other documents which can be searched and cross-referenced. <http://www.yadvashem.org/>

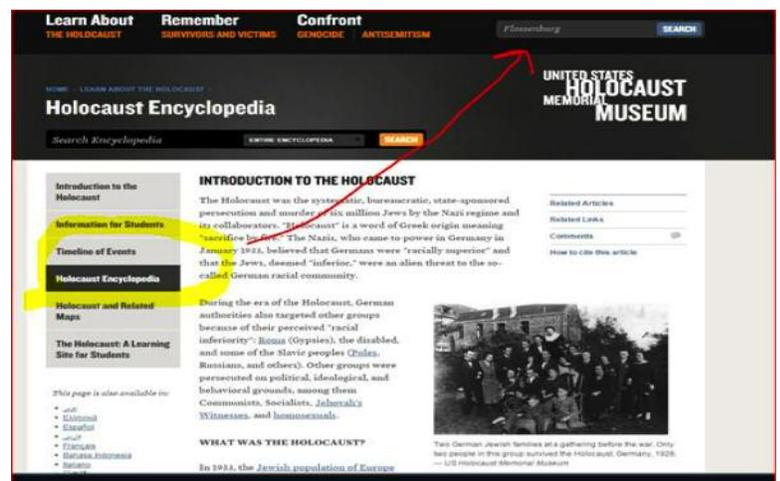


## United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM)

In 1993, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in Washington D.C. According to its website, "Since its dedication in 1993, the Museum has welcomed more than 38 million visitors, including 96 heads of state and more than ten million school-age children. Our website, the world's leading online authority on the Holocaust, is available in 15 languages and was visited in 2014 by more than 9 million people representing 236 countries and territories." The USHMM website is a truly massive site, with its online searchable Holocaust



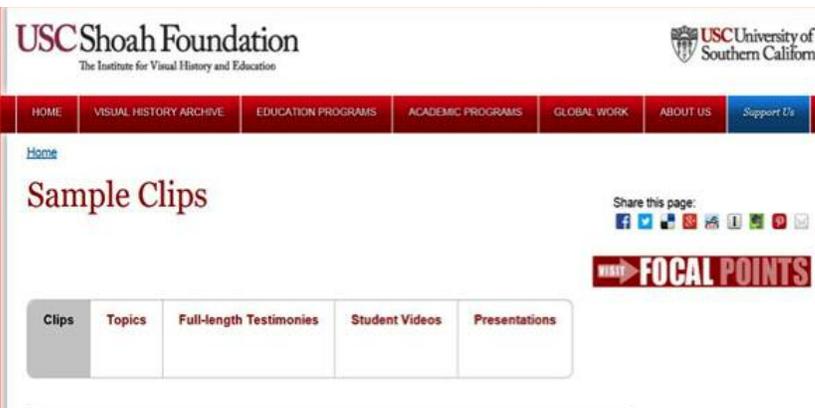
Encyclopedia attracting 12 million visits in 2014 alone. For researchers, there is a treasure trove of material available both online, and by conducting personal research in the Library and Archives Reading Room. Whether by phone, onsite, at conferences or even online, the historians, researchers and archivists employed at the USHMM provide expert guidance and are more than happy to assist researchers. [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)



## USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History Foundation

In 1994, following a personal epiphany after creating the film, "Schindler's List", Steven Spielberg was inspired to create the Shoah Visual History Foundation. His goal was to collect as many filmed testimonies as possible from survivors across the globe. Today, this collection has evolved exponentially to become the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education which includes an online portal, the Visual History Archive..."that allows users to search through and view 52,000 audiovisual testimonies of survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust...that have been cataloged and indexed at the Institute. These testimonies were conducted in 62 countries and 39 languages". This site

is valuable because it allows researchers to learn through the voices of survivors. When we focus only on the murdered millions, without hearing from the survivors, we lose a sense of the humanity and the culture that was stolen from us all. Video clips in the Visual History Archive are searchable using different filters, based upon the person's experience during the Holocaust: by location (Auschwitz), by time period ("Liberation" or "Life Before the War"), by incident (Kristallnacht, The Night of the Broken Glass), etc. <https://sfi.usc.edu/watch>



## JewishGen

The last website I want to mention is specifically for genealogists. In 1987, JewishGen was born and has been extremely valuable to me as I research my Holocaust era relations. This site is more than a mere website or database, or even a collection of databases. It offers a human connection to the data we find. Through the various discussion groups, we guide each other, answer brick wall questions and provide support within the parameters of that group's research subject. JewishGen states on its site that it was "founded as a bulletin board with only 150 users who were interested in Jewish genealogy... there are over 700 active volunteers throughout the world who actively contribute to our ever growing collection of databases, resources and search tools. Currently, JewishGen hosts more than 20 million records, and provides a myriad of resources and search tools designed to assist those researching their Jewish ancestry." The massive Holocaust Era Databases contain close to 200 different data files that are searchable: <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Holocaust/>. The personal assistance JewishGen members



generously offer through the discussion groups helps researchers to take the next step. A case in point: one of the researchers with whom I have become friends on the GerSig group (German Special Interest Group) recently spent hours online with me to translate newly "live" documents from the Berlin State Archives that related to my family from the 1800s!

## Hitting the Jackpot

When I attended the 2003 IAJGS conference in Washington D.C. I decided to try out the pilot database of the Pages of Testimony, even though I was sure that I would not find anyone with my surname, Mode. That single search led to the most important genealogical discovery in my thirty-one years of research: Pages of Testimony submitted by a woman whose maiden name was also Mode:

<b>YAD VASHEM</b> Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority		<b>DAF-ED</b>		<b>דף-עד</b>		<b>יד ושם</b> P.O.B. 3477 Jerusalem, Israel	
<b>A Page of Testimony</b>							
THE MARTYRS' AND HEROES' REMEMBRANCE LAW, 5713-1953 determined in Article No. 2 that							
The task of YAD VASHEM is to gather into the homeland material regarding all those members of the Jewish people who hid down their lives, who fought and rebelled against the Nazi enemy and his collaborators, and to perpetuate their memory and that of the communities, organizations, and institutions which were destroyed because they were Jewish.							
Family name *		MODE		1. שם המשפחה *			
First Name (maiden name)		SIEGFRIED SIMON		2. השם הפרטי (שם לפני הנישואין)			
Place of birth (town, country)		BERLIN, GERMANY		Date of birth		27-9-1877	
Name of mother		ANNA MODE		Name of father		CARL MODE	
Name of spouse (if a wife, add maiden name)		ELLY, NEE BOCK		7. שם בן או בת הזוג (אם בת זוג נא לרשום שם משפחה לפני הנישואין)			
Place of residence before the war		BERLIN CHARLOTTENBURG					
Places of residence during the war		AS ABOVE					
Circumstances of death (place, date, etc.)		ARRESTED AND TAKEN BY TRAIN TO POLAND NEVER ARRIVED. JANUARY 1941					
I, the undersigned residing at (full address)		Hilda Kaye nee Mode, 21 DEANSCROFT AVE. LONDON N.W.9					
relationship to deceased		DAUGHTER					
hereby declare that this testimony is correct to the best of my knowledge. מצהירה בזה כי עדות זו נכונה לפי מיטב ידיעותי.							
Signature		Hilda Kaye					
Place and date		London 20-1-1979					
"...ונתתי להם בבית ובחומות ירושם אשר לא יכרת" (שם"ד, כ"ג) "...even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name that shall not be cut off." (Leviticus, 19:15)							
* Please inscribe the name of each victim of the Holocaust on a separate form.							
BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS							

Since 2003 I have utilized the tools of all of the sources in this article to uncover the story of the Berlin Modes. This first Page of Testimony gave me a treasure trove of information: the submitter's name and address, her parents' names, their dates of birth, when they were deported and even her grandparents' names. JewishGen's discussion groups became my tool to try to locate her. At the time I had no clue whether Hilda was still in England or even alive! I later learned that the submitter, Hilda Mode Kaye, was the only member of her large family to safely flee Germany, just weeks before September 1, 1939 and the start of World War II. How I eventually found my Mode cousins living in Israel, the fate of the rest of this family, and what has transpired since 2003 will be the subjects of an article in the next issue of *Chronicles*. Stay tuned!

P.S. Best of luck to all in using these four sites. Feel free to reach out to me if I can be of assistance. I am always happy to help with research related to the Holocaust. ❖

*A special education teacher in the East Windsor, NJ Regional School District, Felicia Mode Alexander has taught both middle and high school world history and has been actively involved in Holocaust education, connecting her students with survivors and*

*escorting them to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington D.C. each year. Her passion for genealogy research and Holocaust education came to fruition when she discovered a long lost cousin, the only child of a sole survivor, living in Israel.*

*Originally from the Boston area Felicia has been actively researching her family for more than twenty years. She is a member of the Jewish Genealogical Societies of Greater Philadelphia and Boston and is researching Mode, Shuman, Abrahams, Bornstein in Berlin and Posen; Grossman, Longbord and Taliafsky in Kiev region. You can contact Felicia at [fmode@verizon.net](mailto:fmode@verizon.net)*

# IN PRAISE OF SOUTHWEST PHILADELPHIA

(from a speech given in May 2012)

by Dennis Greenstein

Note: Dennis was instrumental in the successful outcome of a random act of genealogical kindness reported by Evan Fishman in "Chronicles," Vol. 30-1 (Spring 2013). He provided the black and white photo that appears later in this article and in Allen Meyers' *The Jewish Community of West Philadelphia*.



I think that, along with my brother Marc and sister Sheryl, I had a somewhat unique opportunity to experience not only growing up in "Southwest", but doing so from a front row seat on Main Street, if you will, having lived above, or in, Phil's Luncheonette. Owned by our dad, it was one of the hubs of activity in our little *shtetl* known as Southwest Philadelphia.

One of my earliest memories is of one of "Phil's Boys", as they were called in the mid-'50s. Kenny Berkoff, who was also our next-door neighbor, was holding me upside down over the open sewer main, saying: "Okay, you little fat kid, I'm going to throw you down the sewer". I still shudder whenever I see a sewer outlet!

As I grew up, I had one older birth brother, Marc, but a million older brothers that I looked up to: Kenny "Shtoch" Berkoff, my beloved dear friend Bobby "Needles" Needleman, Uncle "Zombie" Sondberg, Eddie "Vic" Barmach, Harold "Beans" Kootchick, Moots and Foots from Litchfield Street, "Pickles" Zarrett, Eugene "Sonny Shrivka" Covello, and a host of other guys, all of whom had nicknames, and each one more colorful than the other. Many of these guys didn't have jobs, so their real vocation was hanging on Phil's Corner, helping to raise the three of us!

I believe that Marc, Sheryl, and I were charter members in Uncle Zomb's Day Camp. I still vividly recall Zombie teaching and drilling me on all the state capitals, and then national capitals.

Then, as years went on, I recall hanging out on our front steps during summer days, watching the never ending parade of guys show up for stickball tournaments, all-star baseball marathons, Monopoly marathons, wire ball, whiffle ball, box ball in the Hebrew school lot, touch football in 57th street, and a host of other street games that contributed to a wonderful childhood.

As I approached Bar Mitzvah age, I started to work with my dad in the store and gained unique experiences that, later on in life, would enable me to deal with people from all walks of life, backgrounds, religions, etc. Besides, dipping ice cream and working the milk shake machine firmed up my left arm muscles. I could write a book about working with my dad at Phil's.

Despite the *agita* [aggravation] of working for a close relative and wanting to quit every hour or so, I received free entertainment from the cast of characters who ate there daily. I'm sure that the creators of *Cheers* must have stopped by Phil's one day during the '60s and drawn their inspiration from what they saw there. Some of my favorites were: Sam Besden and his son Hymie, who ate with us daily, but never together; Beans Kootchick, who would always come in late so that he could spread his *Daily News* over an entire booth while he ate (by the way Beans passed away about two to three weeks ago); Needles, who would constantly harangue my father



Outside of Phil's Luncheonette in West Philadelphia. Dennis is little boy sitting at top of photo. (From Allen Meyers' *The Jewish Community of West Philadelphia*, courtesy of Dennis Greenstein)

and knew which buttons to push; and dozens of others who contributed to my daily entertainment. I was told that David Brenner used to hang out there in the 1950s, before I started working, while he was courting a local girl whom he eventually married.

Hillary Clinton wrote a book called *It Takes A Village*. Well, we indeed had our village. My biological parents raised me, for sure, but a good part of my young years were spent with my adopted parents next door. Their house was an extension of ours. Their door was open to us night and day, and my Aunt Hannah and Uncle Duke raised us just as much as our parents, maybe a bit more.

Duke was a busy executive by day, but in the evenings, found time, among other activities, to run a private chartered bank, called "Corporation", in his basement on Tuesday nights. Our store became the drop-off point for either weekly deposits or weekly loan payments for those who couldn't make it to the Tuesday night meetings. I had a ringside seat on all of this! I couldn't have gotten a better education anywhere. Duke's house was like a mecca for one and all. People would drift in every evening to talk, tell stories, or just get advice on business, life, etc. I learned more from his observations and discussions than I ever learned in business school!

One of the saddest days of my life was the day we sold the property; one of the terms was that we had to remove all of the store equipment. I could not bring myself to help out my dad in this task. I recall that Kenny Berkoff helped him, and maybe some of Kenny's friends, but surely it was a sad day for all of us. . . .

I am currently the CFO of a real estate development company. I sometimes wonder if the hours that we spent playing *Monopoly* on our front steps contributed to that, or maybe it was the time that I invested in doing the books of my Ice Cup and Auto Simonizing enterprise. During this time, I also learned about the stock market from another Phil's Guy, Tony Lieberman. He introduced us to Putnam Funds and Manhattan Fund, so at sixteen years old, I was already making money to pay for college by trading in mutual funds!

During my senior year at Drexel I became involved with Israel and stayed involved through the late 1980s. There were some very trying and interesting times during that period, and often, while serving in the Israel Defense Force (IDF) I'd be in some freezing cold place cursing and thinking 'how the heck I got there from 57th & Beaumont.' I'd then recall Beth Am Israel [teacher] Mrs. Cohen and [principal] Mr. Kornblatt, smile, and then I'd forget the cold and the predicament, knowing how proud they'd be that one of their students was actually living the Jewish Dream in Israel.

I'm sure that my times at Beth Am, be it in Hebrew School, JC [Junior Congregation], or our Youth Group, [YG] had a tremendous influence on me. I drew on that upbringing or those experiences more than I ever knew. I'm not sure if BAI [Beth Am Israel] was the major influence on me to explore Israel, but it certainly helped to plant the seed, which grew into the best experiences that I ever had in my lifetime thus far.

Speaking of BAI and JC and YG, our neighborhood was blessed with some of the greatest talents imaginable. We had our own Rodgers & Hammerstein in Fred Tobis and Michael Masch, who wrote plays, original music, and lyrics. We had great directors (Marv Weber), pianist (Bob Kotzen) and others, who enabled us to put on wonderful Broadway shows in the BAI auditoriums. Throughout my JC/BAI experience, these guys had the talent to write, perform, and mount great *Melaveh Malkahs* (lit. "Escorting the [Sabbath] Queen", in this case the term refers to Saturday night (after Shabbat has concluded) gatherings of friends or larger group social events). Mystery Man, Blue & White Color Wars, all of which captured my imagination at an early stage. It was magical when the lights were dimmed on a Saturday evening, the girls held the *Havdalah* (a Jewish religious ceremony or formal prayer marking the end of the Sabbath) candles, and sang the lovely hymns of that beautiful ceremony. I have to admit that every time I hear *Havdalah*, I close my eyes, and think I'm back at the Cutler Auditorium.

When I met my wife, she was amazed that I could do an entire service by heart. I never needed a prayer book, only for the English!! She thought I was ultra-orthodox!

These are just a few of the memories that I have from growing up in Southwest. A few others are:

- Watching some of the older guys literally launch pimple balls into lower orbit when playing wire ball.
- Watching Alan Goldpaint drive his cab up on our sidewalk, and when my dad screamed at him, he retorted: "Sorry, Phil, I thought it was the Hot Shoppe."
- Tagging along with my brother, Steve Klempner, Earl Shub, and others to the Collegeville Smorgasbord.
- Watching the parade of Corvettes drive around and around the corner on summer nights: Stevie Stadlin, Stevie Lyons, Lee Kessler, Ronnie Deitch, and Alan "Head" Rubin, if I recall correctly.
- Speaking of cars, who can forget the Futmobile: a green 1947(?) Chrysler adorned with pink polka dots!
- Coming home late on a Sunday evening, to find a few select diehard corner "bums", as my mother would say, standing there and holding up the wall, so that "it shouldn't fall down!!"

My mother, still basically healthy at ninety-four, typically laments that she and Phil worked hard but had nothing to show for it when we closed the store in 1969. I think she is so wrong; I know that I have a collection of memories that are literally priceless, and I wouldn't trade them for ANYTHING! ❖

*Born and raised in a Jewish neighborhood (which he affectionately calls "the Southwest Philly Ghetto"), surrounded by non-Jewish neighborhoods and Cobbs Creek Park, Dennis comments that "the few hundred Jewish families living there were all known to one another through our actively attended synagogue, Beth Am Israel."*

*After making aliyah (immigration to Israel) in 1977, he met his wife while they were both working at the Tiberias Plaza Hotel. In 1988 he returned to the U.S. with his wife and two children. Dennis has worked as comptroller or CFO for various companies in the U.S. and Israel, including the Tiberias Plaza Hotel.*

*Surnames and towns of interest include: CUTLER (Kotlyar) from Kaminetz Podolsk, Ukraine; COOPERSTEIN from Satanov, Ukraine, GREENSTEIN and BERKOWITZ from Szeged, Hungary. Contact Dennis at: [dennisg@aol.com](mailto:dennisg@aol.com)*

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## PERSONAL MEMORIES OF SYNAGOGUE LIFE

Excerpted from "Congregation Beth Am Israel: As I Recall the Synagogue:  
Reminiscences of Southwest Philadelphia from the 1940s to the 1960s"  
by Rabbi Shalom Bronstein

*Note: Back in 2000, Rabbi Shalom Bronstein committed his memories of Congregation Beth Am Israel in the above titled paper. We've taken the liberty of excerpting segments to compliment Dennis Greenstein's article.*

*Bronstein clearly conveys his love for Congregation Beth Am Israel and its impact on him. By skillfully intertwining details about his growing up years with those that highlight congregational life as he remembers them, he provides us with an absorbing narrative about and insights into life in Southwest Philadelphia. His descriptions of his father's significant role in synagogue life give us both personal genealogical as well as historical information. Bronstein's engaging account is filled with the names of the movers and shakers at Congregation Beth Am Israel during the era when the synagogue was located in Southwest Philadelphia. Readers come away with a clear sense of the level of involvement and the aspects of synagogue life that were important to the rabbi, educators, staff, officers and board of trustees, as well as congregants in general. Like Dennis Greenstein, Bronstein reinforces the notion that we are shaped by the people who surround us (parents, siblings, other relative, neighbors, etc.), and the institutions and organizations they created.*



These thoughts, written, in Jerusalem are in tribute to an unforgettable congregation, which did so much for the Jewish people in a very modest way.

I always felt that Congregation Beth Am Israel [located then at 58th Street and Warrington Avenue] had a very positive Jewish influence on thousands of people who passed through its doors during its years in Southwest Philadelphia. Those of us who spent part of our formative years within its walls

and whose lives were influenced by Beth Am are grateful to the dedicated men and women who gave of their time and resources to create such a strong bastion of Jewish life in the area. Beth Am graduates always recall fondly those days when their synagogue was an important part of their lives. We all felt strongly that Beth Am was just like another member of our family. (p. 33)

. . . while the role of the synagogue was central to my family and to my life during these years, it certainly was not so for the majority of the Jews living in the neighborhood. In the same light, however, in comparing notes with contemporaries who grew up in other sections of Philadelphia at the same time, Beth Am did play a larger role in the community and did have a greater influence on its students than most other neighborhood congregations. (p. 1)

Most of us attended the same school and the same synagogue and, to a certain extent, we lived in sort of a *shtetl*, or completely self-contained neighborhood. The furthest one had to go from the immediate neighborhood to meet our needs was to the public library at the junction of 58th St., Baltimore Avenue and Cobbs Creek Parkway. (pp. 2-3)

“When the synagogue was sold, [circa 1970] it was as though a close relative of mine had died.” (p. 7)

Beth Am Israel and Rabbi [Morris] Goodblatt were synonymous. He often commented that he had a monogamous relationship with his wife Doris and with the congregation. Beth Am was the only congregation he served in his long career. If someone asked you what congregation your family belonged to and you answered Beth Am, the next phrase would be, "Oh, Rabbi Goodblatt's synagogue." (p. 8)

At the conclusion of the [consecration] ceremony, the [long time] chairman of the School Committee, Mr. Sidney Lichtenstein, gave each entering student a new shining penny in a special envelope... The metaphor was that just as the penny would increase in value if properly invested, our Hebrew education was a very serious investment and we would begin to see the first fruits of it upon graduating from Hebrew High School. We were told that when we graduated, we could trade in this penny for a silver dollar. Many of us did. We were also permitted to keep the penny and I still have both. (p. 11)



**Rabbi Morris Goodblatt**

Bronstein concurs with Greenstein on the impact of Junior Congregation:

Beth Am was famous for its Junior Congregation. I began to attend regularly in the 1940s, before the school building was constructed... This Beth Am institution was so renowned that Rabbi Goodblatt mentioned to me that he would be invited to the Jewish Theological Seminary to lecture to the senior students in the Practical Theology class on role of the Junior Congregation. The Junior Congregation of Beth Am Israel had a national reputation. It is hard to figure out where to begin to give the feeling one had growing up in the "JC." (p. 15)

He continues with a description of another colorful force of nature in the synagogue's ranks:

Although this title did not officially exist at Beth Am, the congregation enjoyed the services of one of the most skilled, devoted and efficient executive directors of any congregation anywhere. This was Sadie Moses. Belle Rose dedicated her history of Beth Am to her memory, a very appropriate tribute... Some youngsters even referred to the synagogue as "Aunt Sadie's Shul." The story is told that there were occasions when she paid some of the utility bills out of her own pocket so as not to incur late payment penalties. In the pre-computer days,

Sadie knew everything. She was always in the office and always made sure that everything having to do with the synagogue was "just so."... if Sadie were in charge of something, you knew that it would be more than perfect. She never liked to be singled out for praise and tried very hard to remain in the background... After Rabbi Goodblatt, Sadie Moses was the dominant personality of Beth Am in my day. (p. 24)

I would be remiss in not relating the role my late father, Martin Bronstein, played in the synagogue for nearly three decades... Known as Marty to all, he was responsible for some innovations in the running of the synagogue. For a number of years he served as membership chairman. He was against providing any synagogue services to non-members who lived in the neighborhood. He felt that the synagogue had something to offer the Jews in the neighborhood on many different levels. He strongly believed that all the Jews who lived in the area and wanted to avail themselves of its benefits should belong to the synagogue...

There were different priced memberships based on the location of the seats in the High Holidays. My father saw to it that the seats of those who paid reduced membership were randomly distributed throughout the synagogue. Your neighbor in the most expensive seat section could very well be someone paying a nominal membership. He instituted the membership directory that came out every two or three years. In it, all members were listed along with their occupation. It provided free advertising for the congregants. There were notices on the pages urging fellow synagogue members to patronize each other... My father did not like to be in the limelight and shied away from public speaking...



The Former Synagogue Building, October 1998  
Northeast Corner, 58<sup>th</sup> Street & Warrington Avenue

Photo courtesy Shalom Bronstein

In March 1967, I was asked by the Seminary to give the address at the breakfast at which my father was honored. He also chaired the annual dinner of the congregation for a number of years. This was also a fund raising event, usually held in one of the hotels in Center City. It was also an opportunity to recognize those whose contributions made Beth Am the fine synagogue it was. My father refused to be an honoree... When the synagogue building at 58th & Warrington Avenue was sold, the contents were stored in my father's warehouse until they were transferred to the new location. (pp. 25-27) ❖

*Rabbi Shalom Bronstein, a JGSGP member is a native Philadelphian and graduate of Temple University, Gratz College & the Jewish Theological Seminary. After serving as a congregational rabbi for sixteen years, he made aliyah with his family in 1986, settling in Jerusalem. He is a member of the Israel Genealogical Research Association, Association of Professional Genealogists and Rabbinical Assembly. He lectured at the 2004 IAJGS conference in Jerusalem and delivered three papers at the 2009 IAJGS-Philadelphia conference. He is currently involved in transcribing necrology lists from Hebrew & Yiddish to English for the Yizkor Book Project of JewishGen.*

*Shalom Bronstein is researching - SHULMAN/SHILLMAN – Panevezys, Pumpenai; BLOCH – Ramygala, Krekanava (Lithuania); the DIMMERMAN, BECK & GELMAN families from Ostrog & vicinity (Volhyn); BRONSTEIN, BROWNSTEIN, RUNSTEIN, ROCHMANN - Kishinev (Moldava); GOLDSTEIN - Iasi (Romania) – those who came to America all settled in Philadelphia; GOLDZWEIG & LETZTER - Cholojow/Uzlovoye (Eastern Galicia/Ukraine).*

You can contact Rabbi Bronstein at: [sygaa@netvision.net.il](mailto:sygaa@netvision.net.il)

## APRIL MEETING SUMMARY

by Linda Ewall-Krocker

Guest speaker on April 13 was Yuri Dorn of Minsk, Belarus, coordinator for the Jewish Heritage Research Group in Belarus. Yuri explained that 2.5 million documents exist in several formats and are stored in Minsk and Grodno. These documents are categorized by year and region and date back to 1645.

### Censuses:

Started in 1795 when Jews didn't have surnames; by 1806 surnames were recorded based on geography, professions, and character traits. Only girls were listed in the 1836 census, because people were reluctant to identify boys who could be conscripted. People were fined if they hid their sons from the census records beginning in 1851. Last full census in Russian Empire was administered in 1897. Later censuses included street names, age at time of census, and sometimes date of death of family members, arrivals or departures into the area.

### Metric records:

Every Jewish community had to have this kind of record after 1834, and the local rabbi was responsible for the information. Every *shtetl* (small towns with large Jewish population which existed in Central and Eastern Europe before the Holocaust) had two rabbis: a rabbi who was hired by the government, and a second who was elected by the local population. These records included dates of birth, dates of death, marriages, and divorces. While they're the easiest to research, they didn't happen often.

### Family lists:

Begun after 1887, they were mainly used for tax purposes.

### Draft lists:

Beginning in 1827 Jews were required to serve in the army for twenty-five years, unlike non-Jews who only had to serve three years. In order to fulfill the quotas, boys as young as 9-10 years old were drafted. Conditions were very hard; many were forced to convert to Christianity. Exemptions were granted if a boy were the only son in the family, or if he were married with a child. Consequently Jewish men got married earlier and bore children, resulting in significant increase in population. Almost all families in the 18th and 19th centuries had someone serving in the army. Those who fulfilled the 25-year service requirement were given special privileges, such as being allowed to purchase real estate and live beyond the Pale of Settlement. By 1874 the 25-year service obligation was rescinded, and Jews only had to serve three years like the rest of the population.

### Applications for Passports:

Anti-Semitism and poverty were major reasons. Jews couldn't hold all occupations in the empire. There were many occupations which were off limits to Jews; many were artisans and shoemakers. Polls taken in 1874 revealed that 87% of the inn owners were Jewish; in addition Jews produced vodka. Consequently the government attributed alcoholism to the Jews. Young Jewish males also applied in order to avoid serving in the czar's army. In 1895 a law was passed that only those who lived in the villages for over twenty-five years could stay, resulting in significant migration to the *shtetlach* (plural of *shtetl*) and a 20% increase in the population there by 1900. Passport applications include names of family members and their dates of birth, and sometimes occupations and where they lived.

Criminal records were the best-kept records that provided information about the less favorable aspects of everyday life.. Economic crimes were most common; there weren't too many rapists and murderers among Jews.

Archives: By 1920 there were only two archives, in Minsk & Grodno. Belarussian law restricts pre-1944 records as



Translator, Irina Walsh & Yuri Dorn

well as those from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and KGB records after 1944. Later records, until 1974, stored in eight archives around Belarus, are in better condition, and are open to researchers.. The cost for ordering such records varies, from \$350 for major records only to \$1,000 for the records from a large *shtetl*. JGSGP president, Fred Blum found one on JewishGen.

The three ways to conduct research:

- Contact archives directly. It takes time to connect with them, but can bring results. A researcher can spend forty hours on one research project which covers only the major documents. For some researchers that's enough, but most would like to know more about family than that.
- Hire a private, professional genealogist. There are presently six professional genealogists available who can spend three to four months on a single project. They're limited to a few cases in a month, and because Belarus doesn't have electronic databases, everything must be checked manually (and you may have to wait for documents to come back from other researchers). A power of attorney document may be needed which takes time to obtain and requires a fee. Nevertheless, there are a lot of projects going on, and a lot of orders come from Israel, South America and South Africa requesting proof that the ancestors lived in Poland in order to get Polish citizenship.
- Travel personally to Belarus, hire a translator, go to the archives, and spend a few weeks there to find the desired information. This may not be the most feasible, but it's the fastest. Foreigners get the documents right away in the archives, bypass archive workers working with a particular document, and don't need a power of attorney document. More and more people are coming to find their ancestry.
- The government is encouraging foreign visitors. A visa is now half as expensive as formerly. New hotels are under-occupied, and room rates have dropped by 20%. Belarussian *shtetlach* have remained frozen in time so a client can get a taste of authentic *shtetl* life. A word of advice: plan your trip. Few companies specialize in Jewish history, but the younger generation knows English and can be helpful.

Whereas 420 *shtetlach*, synagogues, and Jewish cemeteries existed before the Holocaust, only 100 remain. Two and half million Belarussian people were killed during World War II, and half the villages were destroyed by fire. Some homes are being renovated now. Since there is no law for restitution, Belarussians are not afraid to let foreigners into their homes because they can't take their homes back. Only synagogues are given back to the Jewish community, but if a former synagogue is currently used for sports events or other community purposes, it cannot resume its original function. Only 13,000 people claimed to be Jewish in 1979; there are 25-30,000 Jewish people in Belarus now.

After an arrest in the 1990s the Mormons' attempts to copy records from Jewish and non-Jewish populations, ended. Some records are available at [www.JewishGen.org](http://www.JewishGen.org). ❖

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## MAY MEETING SUMMARY

by Linda Ewall-Krocker & Carole Strickland

**“Jewish Heritage Travel in Eastern Europe, From Empty Spaces to New Realities”**

Presented by Ruth Ellen Gruber

**A**s a foreign correspondent for United Press International (UPI) in the 1970s and '80s, Ruth Ellen covered Belgrade, Vienna, and Poland. She was once arrested in Poland on a trumped up charge of espionage and was expelled from the country.

While in Warsaw in 1980 she was looking for a place to worship on *erev Yom Kippur* (Yom Kippur eve). She found herself in a small room where some elderly Jews were praying on their own. The younger people spoke with her and invited her to their homes because she was “a real Jew.” They were just beginning to learn about their Jewish heritage and wanted to know what to do. This resulted in lifelong friendships for Ruth Ellen with people who became the stalwarts of Jewish revival in the area. They initiated the “Jewish Flying University” to teach themselves what it means to be and how to be Jewish.



Ruth Ellen Gruber - Krakow, Poland

She later began writing for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) and looking for synagogues and cemeteries in Hungary, Poland, and Romania. She shared her photographs with her brother, Samuel Gruber, an architectural historian and historic preservationist, who was the founding director of the Jewish Heritage Council of the World Monuments Fund. In September 1989 Sam and his wife joined Ruth Ellen in Hungary. They traveled together and managed to find twelve synagogues still in existence. They continued in Poland and found about twenty buildings in various states. Bitten by the bug to put these places back on the map, Ruth Ellen wrote her first travel book. She labels these old buildings as “symbolic mezuzahs” for what Jewish life was like. She’s borrowed the term “a tribe of stones” as an epitaph to the cemeteries she has documented. Ruth Ellen believes she was the first person to visit the cemeteries in decades. Despite their neglected condition, these cemeteries “talked to her” of stories of the Jewish human condition. She described herself stretching out her arms to embrace those interred.

Ruth Ellen strongly believes that even if the synagogues have become tourist attractions, such as museums and cultural centers, or department stores, plaques should be affixed on these abandoned or recycled buildings to acknowledge the Jewish history and presence they represent. Bugs and mold are eating up beautiful arks in some old synagogues, and unfortunately the money needed to stabilize and restore these buildings is often lacking. On the other hand the Czech 10 Star Project (<http://www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu/2014/06/16/10-stars-project-is-inaugurated-in-czech-republic/>) has developed a strategy in conjunction



10 Stars Project Plaque - Czech Republic

with civic organizations to restore sites as part of local cultural history. They are currently used as cultural venues, Jewish history centers, and concert halls, more befitting their original purpose. As of last summer, ten sites with synagogues are in a linked network of exhibition sites.



Interior of the Restored Ústěck Synagogue, Czech Republic

Keeping the Jewish heritage of these Eastern European towns and *shtetlach* alive is very important. The iconography and artistry in the headstones found in Romanian Jewish cemeteries are just as important as the artistry found in the monasteries in the region. Whereas Jewish heritage sites weren’t mentioned in guidebooks in the past, that situation is now changing. Ruth Ellen is also strongly opposed to moving any buildings away from their original locations, in Eastern Europe or even in the U.S. She lamented the relocation of a wooden synagogue (B’nai Abraham) in Brenham, Texas to Austin, which leaves the graves of her grandparents and other residents without a context to the original *shul* (synagogue).

**She recommended the following sites:**

- Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw
- Town of Oswiecim, which houses the Auschwitz Jewish Center and Museum based in the only surviving synagogue in that area
- The Holocaust Museum in Belzec, constructed by the American Jewish Committee and the Polish government
- Krakow with its lively, annual Jewish cultural festival in the former Jewish quarter.

**Websites to explore:**

www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu with its dynamic content;  
www.RuthEllenGruber.com;  
www.heritageabroad.gov/Resources.aspx, provided by the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad, with links to Jewish sites. ❖

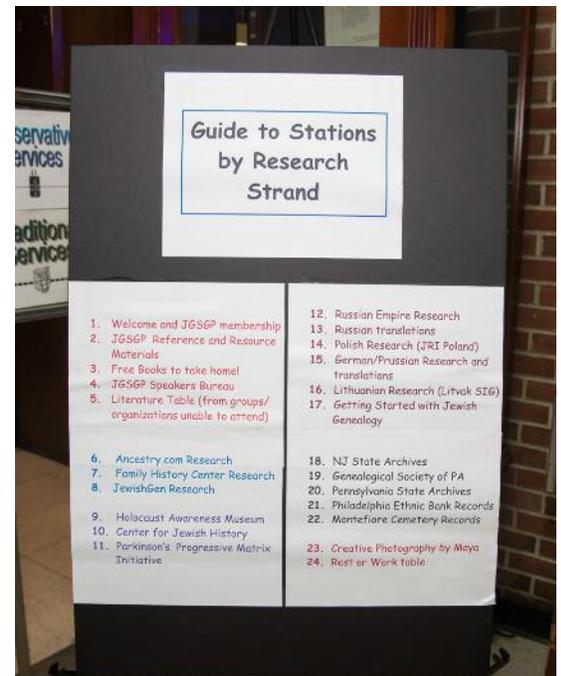
*Photos courtesy of, and copyright © Ruth Ellen Gruber*

## JGSGP GENEALOGY FAIR - JUNE 2015



**Genealogy Fair Guides, Volunteers & JGSGP Board**

(l-r), Bernie Cedar, Susan Neidich, Jim Meyer, Walt Spector, Evan Fishman, David Brill, Fred Blum, Mark Halpern, Cindy Meyer, Ed Flax, Judy Becker, Joel Spector, Felicia Mode Alexander, Barry Wagner



**Susan Neidich, Membership VP at the Welcome Station**



**Marilyn Mazer Golden- Getting Started in Jewish Genealogy**

**Genealogy Fair Photos Courtesy Gene Hurwitz**

# JGSGP GENEALOGY FAIR - JUNE 2015



**Bernie Cedar - Lithuanian Research Station**



**Joel Spector - Russian Translations**



**Don Wittenberg - Philadelphia Holocaust Awareness Museum & Education Center**



**David Brill - Russian Genealogy Station**



**Aaron McWilliam - Pennsylvania State Archives Station**



**Free Books for Genealogy Fair Participants**

Genealogy Fair Photos Courtesy Gene Hurwitz

# JGSGP GENEALOGY FAIR - JUNE 2015



Moriah Amit- Center for Jewish History, NYC



Bruce Jaffe - Montefiore Cemetery Records, Rockledge, PA



Mark Halpern - JRI Poland - Polish Research



James Gross - Ancestry.com & Other Internet Sites Research



Felicia Mode Alexander - JewishGen Research



Myra Hirshorn - Parkinsons Progressive Matrix Initiative

Genealogy Fair Photos Courtesy Gene Hurwitz

# JGSGP QUIZ #6:

by David Brill

According to the 1930 U.S. Census, Anna D. Lincoln (line 32) was born in Lithuania in 1893 to Yiddish speaking parents and was the manager of a "wearing apparel shop." But she was much better known by a different name. What was it? (Clue: Philadelphians of a certain age will recall her eponymous, high fashion store on Rittenhouse Square.)"

You'll find the answer to this issue's quiz on the bottom right hand side of p. 2.

## HAVE EXPERTISE IN GENEALOGY, WILL TRAVEL JGSGP SPEAKERS BUREAU

We are proud of our Speakers Bureau and wish to reach a broader audience in the greater Philadelphia Jewish community.

We have speakers available for synagogue groups and organizations to help their members get started in tracing their family roots. Please contact Stan and Shelda Sandler at [stanshel@msn.com](mailto:stanshel@msn.com) for more details. Our publicity flyer can be found at: [http://www.jgsgp.org/Documents/Speakers\\_Bureau.pdf](http://www.jgsgp.org/Documents/Speakers_Bureau.pdf)

The following Speakers Bureau guidelines have been approved by the JGSGP board of trustees.

- There is a \$100 fee for a speaker.
- The fee will be waived if five attendees join the JGSGP after the presentation, and speaker receives five completed JGSGP membership applications and a \$25 check with each.
- Presentations are given to groups of at least ten adults interested in genealogy.
- Presentations can be made at synagogues and affiliated groups such as men's clubs, sisterhoods, and organizations like ORT and Hadassah, within a 20-30 mile radius of Philadelphia.

Schools, JCC's, and retirement homes will be considered on a case-by-case basis as long as they agree with the above guidelines.



# Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia

## 2015 Membership & Renewal Form

Enjoy *Chronicles*, Our Award Winning Quarterly Publication

Please print, complete and mail this form with your check to our NEW ADDRESS:  
JGSGP, 1657 The Fairway, #145, Jenkintown, PA 19046

You may also complete our online form and pay your dues using PayPal on our web site:  
<http://www.jgsgp.org/>

Membership Categories	New	Renewal	Amount
Individual - \$25			
Family - \$35 (2 Person Household)			
Additional Voluntary Contribution			
<b>A check is enclosed for the amount of:</b>			

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Address 2 \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip+4 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Membership second email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dues are for the calendar year, January 1-December 31, 2015.**

(New members joining after September 30, 2014 receive membership benefits through December 31, 2015.)

**Contributions and dues are tax deductible within the limits of the law.**

What are the most important surnames and their associated ancestral towns that you are researching?  
Provide up to three surnames, towns and current countries which will later be shared with other members.

Surname	Town	Country



## JGSGP CALENDAR & REMINDERS

**Our mailing address is: 1657 The Fairway, #145 Jenkintown, PA 19046**

Please direct all U.S. mail correspondence to this address.

**JGSGP is on the web at: <http://www.jgsgp.org>**

Look for information about other IAJGS member societies:

<http://www.iajgs.org/members/members.html>



Join the JGSGP Facebook group: <http://tinyurl.com/jgsgp>. Our members are continually posting fascinating news and developments which impact on genealogy and important related areas.

**A thirty minute period before each meeting is devoted to browsing reference books and getting help from mentors.**

**We schedule meetings to accommodate our members and excellent speakers who lead complicated lives.**

**Please check your JGSGP emails, our website (<http://jgsgp.org>) and our Facebook page (<http://tinyurl.com/jgsgp>) for complete and up to the minute program information.**

**Sunday, September 20, 2015, 1:30 PM**

**Main Line Reform Temple, 410 Montgomery Ave., Wynnewood, PA 19096**

**Karen Franklin - "New Strategies for Researching German-Jewish Ancestry"**

Family history coordinator for the Leo Baeck Institute in New York City and co-chair of the Board of Governors of JewishGen, Karen Franklin is also a past president of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), and is currently a vice-chair of the Memorial Museums committee of ICOM (International Council of Museums).



The session begins with a glimpse into the not-yet-available collection of Jon Stedman, a long-time, passionate German-Jewish genealogist whose copious research notes and files document the nature of how family history research in Germany and the U.S. has changed over the last fifty years (his research began in 1958). From there Karen will demonstrate how new online resources, accessible genealogies, databases and DNA-- together with aid from local historians and researchers in Germany -- create unparalleled opportunities for researchers of German Jewish family history. Karen will provide contact information for local historians of former Jewish communities, museums and other resources throughout Germany.

**Monday, October 12, 2015, 7:30PM**

**Main Line Reform Temple, 410 Montgomery Ave., Wynnewood, PA 19096**

**Steve Schechter Memorial Lecture**

**Stephen Morse - "One-Step Webpages: A Potpourri of Genealogical Search Tools"**

Stephen Morse is the creator of the One-Step Webpages (<http://www.stevemorse.org/>) for which he's received both the Lifetime Achievement and the Outstanding Contribution Award from the IAJGS, Award of Merit from the National Genealogical Society, first-ever Excellence Award from the Association of Professional Genealogists, and two awards from Polish genealogical societies.



The One-Step website started out as an aid for finding passengers in the Ellis Island database. Shortly afterwards it was expanded to help with searching in the 1930 census. Over the years it has continued to evolve and today includes about 200 web-based tools divided into sixteen separate categories ranging from genealogical searches to astronomical calculations to last-minute bidding on e-bay. This presentation will describe the range of tools available and give the highlights of each one.

**Nov. 8, 2015 1:30pm - Nolan Altman, VP JewishGen -- JOWBR and The Importance of Jewish Burial Records**

**De.c 20, 2015 1:30 pm - Lara Diamond, Ukraine SIG Projects Director -- Ukrainian Research & Ukraine SIG**

**Jan. 17, 2016 1:30 pm -- David Brill - Letters from a Judean**

**Deadline for submission of articles for our fall issue is Sunday, October 4th.**

**Please send material to: [editor@jgsgp.org](mailto:editor@jgsgp.org)**